

Minutes
The Greater Kansas City
Disabled Federal Employees Council
Wednesday, March 3, 2004
09:00 to 11:00 A.M.

Location: GSA Federal Complex
1500 East Bannister Road
Kansas City, MO
Heartland Room

Attendees: Jim Jordan, Cindy Hillman, Donald Ashworth, Stephanie Torres, Daryl Sprague, Janet Hutsell, Judy Skillin, Sultan Farakhen, Michelle Cain, Dan Perkins

Discussion prior to meeting:

Before the meeting officially opened Daryl Sprague asked Cindy Hillman how council members should handle the situation when someone approaches them with a question or concern for the council. In her answer, Cindy explained that the council doesn't have any authority per se, but that we can entertain questions, discuss the issues, and formulate answers to help people resolve issues.

In matters like this the FEB Executive Director and our Council Liaison will be the voice of our council when there is a need to communicate with people in the Federal community. Their working relationships with people will enable them to communicate specific problems and solutions from the council and hopefully influence people to take appropriate action in any case.

Our council members are encouraged to be responsible and responsive to people who approach them, however, we must be careful to let people know that we do not have any specific authority in matters they give us.

After the discussion Daryl agreed to forward a question he received from an employee to Cindy so she could determine how to address the issue.

Our Acting Chairperson, Jim Jordan continued with the agenda:

1. Opening Reminders:
 - A. Welcome new members and guests
Stephanie Torres introduced Donald Ashworth who will be replacing her on the council representing the NRC.
Jim reported that Kendall is doing well.
 - B. Attendance sign-in sheet was distributed and everyone signed in.

C. Minutes from February 4, 2004 meeting were read.

Janet Hutsell asked if the record of the February 4, 2004 DFEC minutes could be updated to include information about the discussion our council had at The Whole Person (January 13, 2004 DFEC meeting) concerning an idea for the creation of a database.

No one in attendance today had notes from the January 13 meeting that we could use to describe the specifics of our conversation. Jim Jordan remembered that there was a conversation about a database The Whole Person had in place. We did not have any other specific information to add to the February minutes.

Jim Jordan clarified several acronyms that were used at the January meeting: **CAP** is the Computer/Electronic Accommodation Program, which is a federal program available to Federal Agencies.

WRP is the Department of Labors Work Recruitment Program

Capper Foundation is a local tech center

Jim Jordan agreed to update the February minutes to reflect these items and to distribute them to everyone via e-mail.

After that discussion Janet Hutsell made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendments that were discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

D. The first FEB “Group Council” meeting was held on Friday, February 6. DFEC was represented by: Jim Jordan, Daryl Sprague, Sultan Farakhan, Michelle Cain, Jean Holiwell, Paul Brown and Dan Perkins. This meeting was held at the Internal Revenue Service, Barkley Training Center in Overland Park, Kansas at 13:30. The Black Federal Employee Council hosted the meeting and our members observed a very well run meeting.

During this session there were visitors from the State of Kansas Advisory Committee’s on Hispanic Affairs and Native American Affairs. These people were invited to this council meeting to bring the community into our environment and to share ideas with each other. Each of the Advisors introduced themselves and gave us a short synopsis of what they do.

2. Old Business:

A. DFEC Secretary position is still vacant.

At the February meeting attendees discussed the need to get a new secretary appointed. Several ideas were discussed, but there is still a vacancy. Jim Jordan asked if anyone present today would be interested in volunteering for this position. He explained that the person who volunteered could elect to perform the duties for a single month and we could ask for volunteers again at

each meeting or they could volunteer to be a temporary appointment until the next election of officers.

Daryl Sprague volunteered to be the DFEC Secretary on a trial basis. The members present today approved the offer unanimously.

B. Prepare Accommodation/Awareness sheet for KCFEB

Jim Jordan handed out a sample document he had prepared to begin discussions that lead to the creation of a draft version of a meeting-planning guide. The drafted document will be e-mailed to our membership for review. Comments and suggestions are to be sent to our Acting Secretary, Daryl Sprague, via e-mail. Our goal is to review the final version of this Guide and deliver it to Cindy Hillman after our April council meeting. (The guide is an attachment to the minutes.)

C. CAP Program, CD-ROM presentation.

Jim announced that in line with the educational goals of this council, the CAP Program would be presented during our April council meeting. This will help make our members aware of the CAP program.

D. Membership Issues

There is a problem maintaining consistent attendance at our council meetings. In the past Kendall Crosby has contacted our members to ask for ideas that would help get people interested in being an active participant at meetings. We still have a problem – what can we do to resolve this issue? Several ideas were discussed including:

Establish clear goals: By establishing clearly defined goals and projects we can draw attention to our council by people who want to serve and be a part of our accomplishments. Jim Jordan stated that his focus as Acting Chairperson was to “Educate Council Members” in specific areas. Examples he mentioned is the project today creating an Accommodation/Awareness sheet and the focus for March being CAP.

Notify FEB members: The FEB members should be notified that we are seeking people who can participate on our council. People may not be aware that there is a place on DFEC to represent their agency.

Post information on the Website: Using our FEB DFEC website we can keep our Bylaws, Minutes, Goals and Projects available to our membership and to the agencies we support. This would also provide accountability for our council to the agencies we represent because the names of council members who attend meetings and participate in projects are recorded as a matter of normal business.

Educate our membership about their role: We talked about educating people who are members on the “Best Practices” of being a council member. This tool could help people learn about their role as a council member and how to appropriately interface with people at their agencies.

Update our e-mail list: By updating our e-mail list we can ensure the correct people are being notified of our activities.

3. New Business:

A. Telework/Telecommuting programs at Federal Agencies

The goal of this topic is to educate our members that people making a request for the opportunity to Telework or Telecommute as an accommodation for a person with a disability is different than a normal healthy person making the same request. Under the Federal Rehabilitation Act (ADA in the private sector) Section 504 this is considered to be a “reasonable accommodation” and must be given full consideration. The manager or supervisor would be required to comply with the request or fully document why they could not.

In addition the CAP program fully supports this type of program by providing the technology equipment required by the agency to facilitate a person who is qualified to receive a “reasonable accommodation” in this case.

We had one person who gave an example of being approved for such a program but how technology hampered his ability to do so. In that case we learned that the screen reader software that was used in the office did not work over the telecommunications link that was necessary to access the computer systems in the office. Recently this person has learned there is a new software program that will support the remote system. We talked about how CAP may be a resource for this person to get the new software that is needed to facilitate his ability to telecommute.

In a second person’s case we heard how being able to work at home during an illness helped him remain employed during an extended period of time out of the office. Technology was provided and full support enabled him to accomplish specific goals that were important to the agency that accommodated his request.

The discussion on this topic helped our council discover the value of people sharing personal experiences with others. We discussed the possibility of our council collecting stories from people who have utilized different programs to successfully navigate through an injury, illness or disability as examples for other people learn about various programs and the successes of people using them. Useful information would include contact information for people who have used the programs that are willing to discuss their experiences; information about what the doctor provided the person for their agency; what the manager of the person had to do to make arrangements; what the employee was responsible to do; etc. These stories will help educate the members of our council and help us get the word out to our agencies.

- B. The April 7, 2004 DFEC meeting is scheduled at the same location. During our meeting the CAP program will be presented. The CD presentation will be used to introduce our members to the program.
4. Comments/Announcements: Following up on our earlier conversation about getting people involved on the council we talked about methods we could use to peak interest. The suggestion was made to send out an e-mail request for agenda items to council members giving them an opportunity to put items on the agenda. Then to follow-up by sending out the agenda before the council meeting to make people aware of the planned activities at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.